

Inquiry Set on Baltics Seizure

Soviet Panel to Review 1940 Annexations

By Michael Dobbs
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, June 1—Setting the stage for a major rewriting of history, the Soviet Union's new governing congress moved today to investigate the annexation of the three formerly independent Baltic states under a secret wartime pact with Nazi Germany.

Faced with rising separatist discontent in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the Congress of People's Deputies agreed to create a commission of inquiry into the 1940 annexations, one of the most controversial episodes of modern history. The probe, backed by President Mikhail Gorbachev, is likely to have far-reaching implications in the

three Soviet republics—the smallest and most Western-oriented in the Soviet Union—and raises new doubts about the legitimacy of Kremlin rule there.

"The Baltic republics are stirred up by this issue," Gorbachev told the congress. "It is not an easy question, but we should not evade it. There should be both a political and legal analysis."

The decision came during another day of stormy debates among congress members, including some sharp criticism of senior Soviet leaders and government ministers. The Kremlin's leading conservative, Yegor Ligachev, came under fire from several speakers for alleged incompetence and corruption.

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Soviets to Reexamine 1940 Seizure of Baltics

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Many Baltic members believe the Kremlin would like to settle the controversy over the absorption of the three republics into the Soviet Union before the 50th anniversary of the Nazi-Soviet pact of Aug. 23, 1939, which divided Eastern Europe into Soviet and German spheres of influence and set the stage for the annexation the following year. Soviet propagandists have always maintained that the three states "voluntarily" requested to become part of the Soviet Union, but this version of history has now been widely discredited as a result of the resurgence of Baltic nationalist feeling.

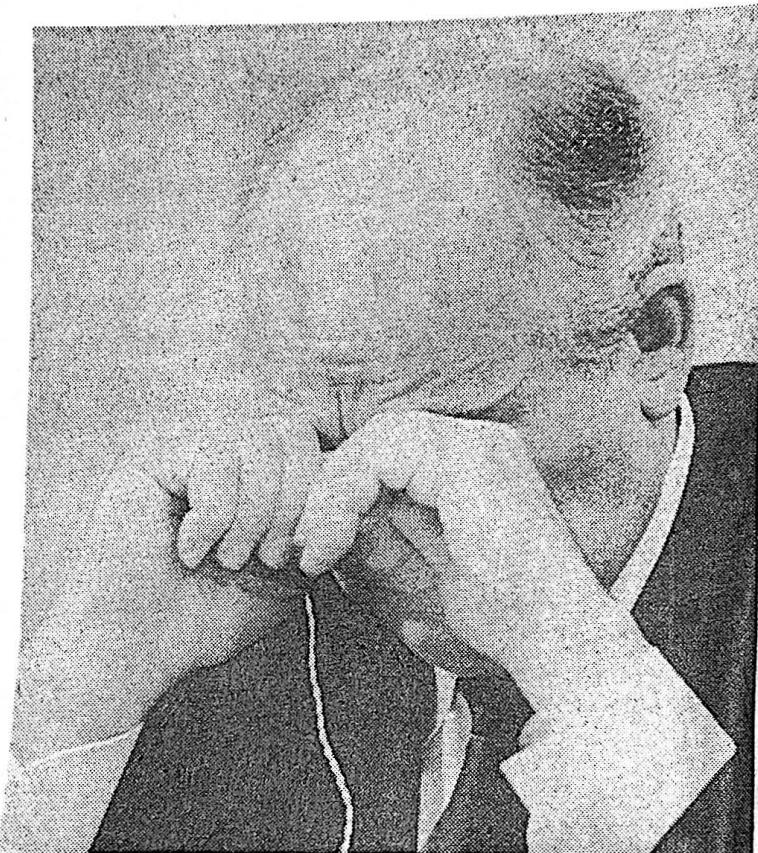
The United States and several other western countries have refused to recognize the annexations, and representatives of the prewar governments of the Baltic states continue to maintain legations in Washington, nearly a half-century after they lost their independence.

One Estonian member, Igor Gryazin, marched to the congress rostrum today and read out the so-called "secret protocol" to the Nazi-Soviet pact, which assigned his nation to the Soviet sphere of influence. His speech was aired live on national television, marking the first time that the Soviet people have been informed by their own media about one of the most controversial events in their country's history.

Details of the four-point secret protocol, which became public knowledge in the West after the capture of German archives at the end of the war, were published in the Baltic states last year, but never before in the central Soviet press.

Today's debate saw heated clashes between Baltic and ethnic Russian members over composition of the investigating commission, a reflection of longstanding strains in ethnic relations in the region. One speaker, an ethnic Russian from Estonia, Vladimir Yerevoi, complained that publication of the pact had encouraged many Estonians to view the Russian minority there as "occupiers and colonizers."

In the end, Gorbachev used his personal authority to persuade the Russian members in the Kremlin's Palace of Congress to agree to the commission. Membership on the panel, which is likely to be headed by Al-



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev rubs his eyes during long session of congress.

Alexander Yakovlev, the ruling party Politburo's foreign policy chief, will be determined later.

Lithuanian members had earlier threatened to walk out of the hall unless the commission were established, and Lithuania's two leading Communist Party officials both appealed to the congress to agree to the inquiry to prevent further undermining of party authority there.

Gorbachev, who must walk a political tightrope between Baltic aspirations and a Russian backlash, raised some doubts about the authenticity of the secret protocol, saying that West Germany had been unable to satisfy Soviet requests to examine an original of the protocol and could only provide a copy. Kremlin officials have repeatedly said that no trace of the secret agreement has been found in Soviet archives.

As the congress enters its second week, meanwhile, it has become clear that Soviet leaders no longer enjoy immunity from criticism. To-

day saw a scathing attack on Ligachev—the former party ideologist who was given responsibility for agriculture in a Politburo reshuffle last October—by radical-reformist member Yuri Chernichenko, a television commentator from Moscow.

"I want to ask, as I have asked 168 times, why has a politically important sphere that is decisive for *perestroika* been given to a man who does not understand anything about agriculture and has already failed in ideology," Chernichenko declared.

Other members of the Politburo later defended their colleague during impromptu question-and-answer sessions with Western reporters, and the party's new ideological chief, Vadim Medvedev, said that Ligachev had been unfairly singled out for criticism. "We don't have any strict division of jobs in the Politburo," Medvedev said. "All members of the Politburo deal with economic problems, and

we also discuss ideological problems together."

Georgia Cables Revealed

Associated Press

MOSCOW, June 1—Stung by accusations of an official coverup surrounding the April 9 military assault that left 20 Georgian nationalist demonstrators dead, Soviet leaders today revealed secret cable messages indicating the Kremlin did not learn of the attack until six hours after it occurred.

The earliest cable, read to the Congress of People's Deputies, was from Georgia party leader Dzhumber Patiashvili seven hours before the assault. It said the situation was tense but that there was no need for central government measures.

The next cable, which was said to have reached Moscow six hours after the attack, notified the Kremlin of the casualties. Patiashvili told the congress Wednesday that the troop commander in the region, Col. Gen. Igor Rodionov, had told Georgian party leaders that he had orders from Moscow to stop the demonstrations.

Rodionov, a member of the congress, told reporters today that the cables were authentic and that they reflected the situation at the time. But the situation deteriorated, he said, into a "pure orgy, with anti-Soviet slogans... appeals to exterminate communists and those who were opposed to them."

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